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4 Partnership Development and Operation

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

— **Margaret Mead**

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Building and maintaining partnerships is key to effective watershed management. Historically, the best watershed management efforts have been made through citizens' organizations focused on identifying and solving local watershed problems. It has been emphasized in many forums that effective watershed management is not possible without partnerships and public participation and support. The history of grassroots support for the overall Clean Lakes Program can be attributed to local involvement and management over the direction and scope of the individual projects rather than traditional USACE water resource projects and USDA Small Watershed Program projects. Unfortunately, many government-sponsored watershed efforts have not always embraced this philosophy. Meaningful, effective, and positive environmental improvements require a watershed management plan and an organization with the support and resources to carry out the plan. Through a watershed partnership, different individuals and organizations come together to address concerns and interests. This chapter focuses on the organizational aspects of successful watershed management efforts.

State and federal agencies are understaffed and underfunded to adequately protect this nation's water resources. They need to find a mechanism to do more with less. Watershed partnerships are one such mechanism. Watershed partnerships bridge the capabilities, assets, and resources of multiple agencies, organizations, and individuals. Developing and implementing a watershed plan through a partnership creates local ownership and consensus for action. In addition to consensus building, partnerships often result in:

More efficient use of financial resources
More creative and acceptable ways to manage and protect natural resources
A community commitment to natural resources overall

A partnership's true value is not in being able to control something, but in enabling others to do things. A formula for successful partnership can be clarity and commitment to outcome, outputs, and operating procedures. Partners need to have a complete understanding of and commitment to these three elements of their work.

What is a partnership? A partnership is an association of two or more people who come together for the purpose of carrying out an activity. Other terms such as "alliances," "coalitions," and "groups" have been used instead of "partnership." Whatever term is used to describe watershed organizations implies place-based focus, multiple parties, and a reliance on science to support decision making. So it is not important what the organization is called as long it fulfills the partnership role. What the partnership is called and how it is organized are entirely up to the group that forms to address the issues of concern. It is generally thought that there are two major types of partnerships: operational (partnerships focus on coordination of issues and are jurisdictional) and planning (partnerships are related to a specific geographic area of concern). For the purpose of this book, partnership is defined as an association of persons, organizations, and agencies joined in a geographically based undertaking as shareholders or partakers to address a problem or issue.

4.2 BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

The partnership-building process includes identifying and engaging interests that have a stake in the management of the watershed, establishing an organization, determining a goal and plan for the watershed, as well as implementing the plan and evaluating its impact. Virtually every successful watershed management project to date has demonstrated that local management is essential to stimulate and maintain the interest needed for a successful effort. The partnership's watershed plan provides a living, feasible approach to address the identified problems, which benefit from the support of the people most affected by the recommended approach.

How does a partnership start? Partnerships may begin through individual initiative and grassroots action; through a local, regional, or national nongovernmental organization; or from federal, state, or local government. In general, the reputation, legitimacy, and degree of trust toward the initiator of the partnership appears to affect the potential for success. For example, in March 2000, the Little Conestoga Watershed Alliance held its formative meeting. The driving forces behind this formation were two county residents who decided that a network of persons actively involved in the water-quality management of Little Conestoga was needed. The watershed alliance would provide a forum for landowners, citizens, educators, local government officials, and environmental professionals to work together to formulate a plan to restore the impaired stream. At the initial meeting a number of concerns were identified: high nutrient levels, erosion, siltation, urban runoff, and streambank erosion by livestock. The need to rectify the predominant perception of watershed residents that murky waters were ordinary and acceptable was identified as a high-priority action for the alliance to address.[1] A kickoff workshop, particularly with the format of brainstorming in small groups, is considered a key step in focusing the watershed management effort on issues of importance to watershed residents. The kickoff workshop is a good way to start because it can serve as: a media event, to make the public aware of the watershed concerns; and as an educational platform for identifying problems and concerns. It is useful to gain participation from groups other than conservation and environmentalists such as business, education, and industry at the kickoff workshop. This workshop provides the chance to include influential officials in the earliest deliberations.

To be a partner, an entity must be willing to build and maintain relationships. Most likely a small group of stakeholders will come together to address a common concern or issue. The most important outcomes of the initial meeting are a commitment to proceed with a partnership to address the concern or issue and to get others involved. Having a shared responsibility for implementing solutions is an important aspect of being a partner. Key participants from the initial meeting help the partnership development process by recruiting volunteers for the executive and other committees. It is important to build a watershed constituency. A few committed people can start an effort, but they will burn out quickly if others are not joining and sharing responsibility. Any person, agency, or organization, regardless of location, that has an interest in the watershed should be invited to participate in the partnership. It is important to remember partnership development is considered an open-ended process, and that new stakeholders and partners may emerge at any time in the management process. Different people are active at different times and use community-driven goals to motivate, but mutual overall effort remains foremost. Partners are entities that formally commit resources to support the overall watershed management effort, and stakeholders are those who have any interest in the effort and participate in an aspect of it. The partnership's efforts will be more successful if all organizations, agencies, and individuals are involved early, identify shared interests, and work toward a shared vision.

A primary goal of any partnership should be to engage a diverse group of stakeholders who are truly representative of the watershed. The opinions on what is best for the watershed will be diverse because many people share the watershed and will often have different points of view (Box 4.1). Not everyone in the watershed will be interested in participating in the partnership. Some individuals will participate, or show up, because their job involves watershed management. Public expectations and organizational mandates for cooperation motivate other organizations and agencies to become involved in partnerships. The opportunity to improve environmental quality will motivate other individuals. It is important to provide opportunities for environmental groups and others with limited financial resources to be active participants in a consensus-developed watershed management plan. If possible, partnerships should provide financial assistance to these organizations to ensure they are involved in the process. Three distinct groups of individuals who participate in watershed partnerships have been identified:

Those who are affected by, but not interested in, watershed management.
Those who are interested in, but not affected by, watershed management.
Those who are both affected by and interested in watershed management.

The partnership should focus its efforts on finding individuals in the third group. However, most partnerships find stakeholders from all three groups. All three groups need each other to succeed, and the partnership needs to bring them together. Effectively involving the target communities is a difficult, time-consuming approach but one that promises a more successful watershed management effort and a better return on the investment of time and energy than general public participation. These stakeholders can influence the decisions, will be affected by the outcome, will be responsible for final decisions, and in some cases can prevent implementation. The consequences of not being inclusive are extensive. Lawsuits can evolve, plans fall through, people can fail to understand the issue, and all heck can break loose. An active partnership can usually minimize the impact of the latter type of stakeholder actions.

No single group of stakeholders can write a consensus-based watershed management plan alone. Without input from all stakeholders, the developed watershed management plan will be difficult to implement. By seeking consensus, the partnership allows the open expression of all points of view and agreement. All stakeholders must agree that they have been given an equal chance to be heard and that the consensus agreement represents the best solution at that time. Stakeholders can work on a watershed management effort and promote the development of a common plan without demanding common values. In fact, involving stakeholders with different values in working on a common plan to implement those values reinforces the

BOX 4.1
The following categories of people, groups, interests, and organizations should be involved in the partnership:

Mass media
Landowners and operators (managers)
Homeowners
Financial institutions
Agribusiness and industries
Farm organizations
Environment and conservation groups
Local elected officials
Federal, state, regional, and local agencies
Chambers of commerce
Educators
Students
Civic and social organizations
Religious leaders
Retired persons
Developers

benefits of considering different perspectives and value systems from the beginning.[2] Ideas stakeholders develop and embrace are not usually personality-dependent and do not collapse with the departure of an individual.

4.3 ORGANIZATION

Meaningful, effective, and positive environmental improvements require a watershed management plan and an organization with the support and resources to carry out the plan.

Institutional arrangements are often overlooked when a watershed management effort is being initiated. Once the stakeholders in the community have been engaged, it is time to organize — to get the process underway. Partnerships organized around only one particular project or problem at a time mean that the groups may be caught up in a series of disconnected projects or making decisions with no end in sight. Organizations formed in response to a crisis or loosely put together tend not to last. To be effective and sustainable, a partnership should be organized and focused. The partnership must engage in meaningful management actions for the long term.

Maintaining the partnership requires work, time, resources, funding, and an understanding that partnerships must have flexible membership. One major issue all partnerships face is the lack of adequate funding support. Partnerships receive financial support in three major categories: organizational development and ongoing support; planning and program development; and program implementation and evaluation. Usually, partnerships face challenges with overall funding stability and flexibility for each funding category, but especially for organizational development and ongoing support. The difficulty with organizations providing funding for development and ongoing support is the lack of products to document progress to justify funding. Funding organizations have to be accountable to their sources of funds and oversight boards. Funding concerns with ongoing support relate to the length of commitment. What happens when funding stops? Does the partnership end? What if outside funding support is required for a partnership to fulfill a vital local need? Finally, a watershed partnership must overtly try to see problems as challenges and opportunities — not barriers to funding. To sustain a credible and long-term effort and be appealing to funding entities, a partnership must have at least the following four characteristics:

A clear goal
A strong management plan with outcomes identified
Leadership representative of the various interests in the watershed
Local support

Holdren[3] and others identified key institutional characteristics of a successful watershed organization. These organizational characteristics include full-time employees, established office space and equipment, established water-quality monitoring and public outreach programs, access to water-quality information, concern for water quality, and interest in citizen participation. Carl Norbeck[4] identified the mechanics for success of local initiatives as: someone to coordinate the startup and seed resources (funding); time to endure the initial phases of team building; clear expectations about the group being a cooperative endeavor; willingness of agencies to work with bottom-up efforts; and some early successes that validate the group's efforts. The watershed management process requires a lot of coordination. It is important to have a focal point for the watershed effort and ensure someone is paying attention to moving committee activities along. These partnership organizational aspects and activities should not be confused with the processes for actual watershed planning, but their direction setting will lead partners to decide what they need in their watershed plan.

In a workshop on watershed initiatives, Born and Genskow[5] highlighted the arrangement favored by workshop participants is for a paid coordinator working directly for the partnership to lead the process. This provides the partnership with a point of focus. For many watershed management efforts, agency staff will be in positions of coordinating and leading the partnership effort. In other circumstances, agency staff will simply hold one of many seats at the table on various committees and teams. The role of the watershed coordinator is to coordinate and monitor all project activities. This role requires someone who can integrate individual activities into a total project. The coordinator needs to have a clear understanding of specific project goals, possess the various strategies to reach those goals, and know how these strategies will come together to form an effective project. Primary qualifications for the watershed coordinator include excellent organizational and interpersonal skills and the ability to work closely with individuals and groups. Strong communication skills, including writing and public speaking, are also necessary to build public support within the watershed. In addition, the watershed coordinator needs to have sufficient technical background to understand the water-quality problem and watershed management strategy and be able to communicate this information to the general public as well as targeted audiences. Finally, in order to facilitate coordination, the coordinator has to be familiar with complementary goals and opportunities available through other natural resource and water-quality programs.[6]

4.3.1 Structure

No one-size-fits-all organizational model would work for all watershed partnerships. The form and structure of a watershed partnership can range from an informal organization to a more complex, formally organized structure (continuity in watershed management is critical, and a formal organization helps ensure that continuity). The right type of organization depends on a number of factors, including the geographic scope of the effort, whether an existing organization can fulfill the role, and the resources available. It is important to make sure that "form follows function." Both the structure of the watershed management organizations and the type of activities supported need to be matched to the scale of the watershed and its issues and concerns. The structure the partnership selects must be tailored to the unique social circumstances of the watershed. Some division of labor and delegation of responsibility are needed within the partnership to take advantage of available resources and expertise. However, a minimum organizational structure is recommended for a community-based, voluntary watershed management effort. This con-

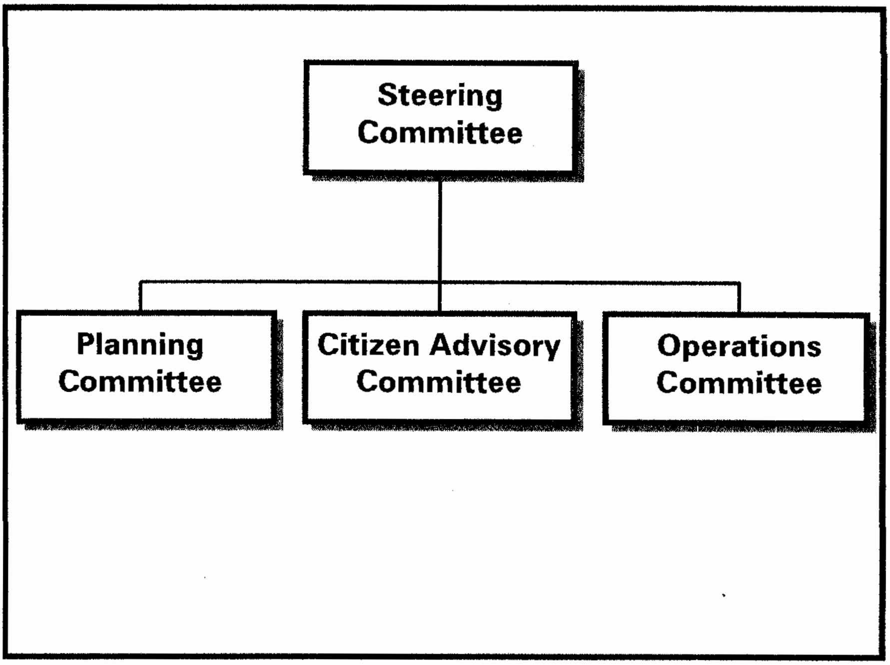

FIGURE 4.1 Partnership organization structure. (Courtesy of CTIC, West Lafayette, IN.)

sists of the following committees: steering, planning, citizen advisory, and operations (Figure 4.1). Other possible committee or subcommittee structures would cover activities such as fund raising/finance, evaluation, outreach, communications, implementation, monitoring, and community relations. Too many committees or committees that are too large are often ineffective for managing watershed plan development and implementation. Each project must find the right balance or mix for its watershed management efforts. The public should have the opportunity to be involved in any and all committees or subcommittees formed. Not all stakeholders need to participate in all aspects of watershed initiatives. Balance is needed in determining the composition of the various committees, as well as the total number of committees.

The first committee that needs to be formed is the steering committee, also known as the management or executive committee. A committee is a collection of individuals representing a specific group of individuals or interest in a matter of mutual concern or interest. Successful partnerships do not just happen; they depend on the leaders who emerge from the stakeholders — leaders are needed on the steering committee. Leadership is a critical factor in making the watershed approach work. Leadership is traditionally viewed as a role for an individual, but the role can come from a group or entity, such as a local board. One of the roles of the steering committee is to provide leadership for the overall watershed management effort. The steering committee should be a relatively small group, less than a dozen people who are interested in the watershed, who are willing to volunteer, and who represent primary interests in the watershed and provide diversity. Leadership of the steering committee should come from the public or private sector, and agency representatives should not be members of the steering committee. The steering committee's responsibilities at a minimum include setting project direction based on the mission statement, performing overall project management, and setting up the necessary organizational structure to develop and implement the plan. Exclusion of certain interests can undermine the legitimacy of the partnership or even halt the watershed effort.

Conversely, a large group might include so many interests that the steering committee and the consensus-building approach might become unmanageable. The steering committee needs to include a balance of representative interests consisting of public, private-citizen public-interest groups, public officials, and economic interests guiding the process to establishing the partnership's mission statement and the project's goals. Steering committee members must keep their constituency informed about the watershed effort, actively interacting with their constituency and accurately representing group positions to the watershed partnership.[5] Operating procedures address how the steering committee members function as a team. Operating procedures are not directly related to the substantive resource issues that the steering committee is working to solve. Rather, they concern procedural things such as who will chair the committee, how member absences will be handled, who will take meeting minutes, and how agendas will be distributed. Making procedural decisions early on helps transform the steering committee from a group of individuals into a cohesive, organized committee. Operating procedures help the steering committee stay focused throughout the watershed management process on the problems and solutions. One major issue that might have to be addressed in the development of operating procedures is transboundary coordination. Given the transboundary nature of watersheds, which do not correspond to government jurisdictions, state agencies must be able to provide the requisite coordination with federal agencies and state and tribal governments.

Steering committee membership, roles, and responsibilities vary depending on water-quality issues and interests of the individuals. Effective steering committees generally coordinate committees' activities and keep the partnership moving forward. The steering committee handles or delegates administrative details to various committees or partners. An important shared role of the steering committee is identifying program resources available to address watershed management needs. The challenge before the steering committee is to reach consensus on programmatic elements that will address the unique needs across the watershed in a logical and cost-effective manner.

Once the steering committee is in place, the next step is to establish the other committees and designate a lead agency or organization. The lead agency's role is to ensure that the watershed planning and implementation process continues to move forward. The Great Swamp Watershed Project is managed by the Ten Towns Great Swamp Watershed Management Committee under an interlocal agreement from the ten municipalities in the watershed.[7] Committee participants usually belong to one of three groups. The first, and most predominant, consists of government agency employees who participate because it is their job. They are not recommended for membership because it would limit their ability to pursue their own agenda. A second group consists of organizations whose constituents have an interest in the issues being addressed. The third group consists of stakeholders, but do they fully represent the public?

The partnership's mission statement must answer the following: who the members are; why it exists; and what it stands for. The latter two components provide direction for the goal-setting process and focus for the planning committee. The process of establishing and adopting a mission statement ensures common understanding is reached early in the project development. The best mission statements are graphic in their descriptions and relate to human experience.

The mission statement articulates the focus and direction of the partnership's efforts. A clear mission statement helps stakeholders understand, relate to, and support watershed protection and restoration efforts. In addition, the mission statement informs the general public, elected officials, business, the press, and community leaders in the watershed about the partnership and the overall scope of their efforts. The mission statement should be used in all the promotional material, on correspondence, in the watershed management plan, and in funding applications. The following hypothetical examples of a partnership mission statement illustrate the range of issues covered and the level of detail.

> The Lake Ethan Partnership has a vision for the watershed that will:
> Maintain, protect, and enhance a balanced watershed fishery
> Preserve and enhance an ecosystem that supports a diverse and balanced wildlife population
> Include water quality suitable for a full range of recreational opportunities
> The purpose of the Emily Creek Partnership is to develop, enhance, and protect the ecological and socioeconomic values of the watershed's natural resources while continuing private ownership.

After the partnership establishes its overall goals, an acceptable planning process must be set up. In order to develop a plan that addresses all resource concerns and integrates ecological, economic, and social factors, multiple stakeholders interested in developing a watershed management plan need to be identified. While the steering committee manages the overall process, the planning committee develops the watershed management plan, working closely with the technical advisory committee (TAC). Advisory committees make recommendations to another committee or higher authority. The recommendations are not binding. Make sure all committee, team, and workgroup members fully understand the purpose and goals of the management effort. The TAC completes the watershed assessment and provides the technical basis for the watershed management plan. The planning committee determines the objectives after identifying the resource concerns in the watershed. The objectives become the goals the planning committee intends on accomplishing. The TAC uses the objectives to understand what the planning committee wants to accomplish, and they identify possible solutions to the identified problems that can meet the partnership's objectives.

An effective way for a partnership's steering committee to rapidly learn about the watershed's issues and condition is to conduct a rapid resource appraisal (RRA). The RRA helps the committee identify the resource concerns, define objectives for the watershed, and learn about the ecological, social, economic, and political aspects of the watershed. An RRA usually takes a full day and consists of the following activities: educational presentations by technical specialists; watershed tour with tour stops; discussion sessions with stakeholders; and meetings with government officials and agencies. By engaging in discussions and learning together in the watershed, the committee starts to develop a common vision and an identity for the partnership. Visual inventories can provide a great opportunity to involve the steering committee in the project and enhance its familiarization during the assessment phase with the watershed. The RRA should be the first step in completing visual inventories of the watershed.

The planning committee usually consists of members from the steering committee and members from other interested organizations and agencies. There should be no restriction on planning committee membership. Planning committee members should be able to: collectively represent a special-interest group as well as their individual interests; serve as decision makers in the watershed; together represent all the social, economic, and cultural communities in the watershed; and represent all the different views, opinions, and interests in the watershed. Using the mission statement, the planning committee defines its purpose and the purpose for the watershed management planning effort and implements the partnership's planning process. The planning committee will use the information regarding the water resource condition to evaluate proposed solutions to select the alternatives that will provide the best framework for the implementation plan. Working closely with the TAC, the planning committee sets the boundaries on the assessment phase. In addition to the overall planning committee, some watershed partnerships form subcommittees or workgroups to develop specific parts of the watershed plan. Subcommittees and workgroups are formed along administrative lines or along objective lines. The planning committee develops a work plan to guide the development of the watershed management. It is important to remember the development of watershed management goals is considered an open-ended process initiated during the assessment phase. New goals may emerge at any time during the planning and implementation process. The watershed management work plan serves two main purposes: as a communication tool, and as a tool to project schedules and work loads for developing the management plan. The work plan provides a basis for operations and progress evaluations. The logistics for completing the work ahead have to be estimated by the planning committee and included in the work plan. The planning committee needs to develop a solid, workable plan and review it annually.

The TAC is a team of professionals and interested stakeholders, usually between 20 to 25 individuals, who assess and evaluate available information and data. The TAC also makes recommendations concerning the need for additional data and information and then, during the planning phase, suggests management strategies and approaches that should meet the goals and objectives developed by the steering and planning committees. The TAC uses the information about what is known and what needs to be known to set priorities for the inventory and assessment work. The TAC membership usually consists of experts and representatives from nonprofit organizations, local organizations, state government, universities (public and private), and the federal government. The interdisciplinary TAC should be organized to draw upon the knowledge and skills of different agencies, organizations, and individuals. The TAC needs to use an interdisciplinary approach that has all the key disciplines (biology, hydrology, etc.) equally involved in the assessment/problem identification and formulation of alternative strategies process. Therefore, one of the first steps in the watershed assessment and identification phase is the determination of the proper disciplines for the effort.

The TAC has an initial meeting where members learn about the planning process, the perceived watershed issues and concerns, and their role in the overall effort. The TAC should select a "chair" at the initial meeting. The role of the chair is to coordinate TAC activities, work with the planning committee, and help facilitate communication among TAC members. TAC members usually complete their assignments individually or in small groups or teams and periodically report results to the entire TAC. The TAC teams can provide continuity as well as important information and insight from varied disciplines, experiences, and backgrounds. The individual members determine if they complete their work individually or use a group process. In formal organizations it may be necessary for the TAC to write a "plan of operation" to guide its work. This plan of work documents the watershed issues and resource concerns each TAC member will be involved with, the inventory and evaluation activities to be carried out, and schedule for completion. In addition, TAC members are responsible for overseeing or conducting any additional resource inventory and data collection efforts needed. TAC members are responsible for determining what is technically feasible to accomplish.

Some watershed partnerships create citizen advisory committees (CAC) to provide advice on various aspects of the partnership operations. CACs are most appropriate when the input, influence, and involvement of a large portion of the watershed residents are needed. In other situations, there will be times that for a particular issue a partnership might create a CAC to obtain focused input. When forming an advisory committee there needs to be a commitment to take their advice seriously. Develop a set of core principles to use when dealing with citizen advisory groups to ensure that personalities and personal feelings do not damage the group's potential. Consider creating a CAC when developing potential solutions to controversial problems, seeking public reaction, wanting help to monitor program implementation, and demonstrating accountability, openness, and responsiveness. When creating a CAC, the partnership needs to have the CAC tasks outlined with responsibilities established. This allows potential members to understand that their role is advisory, not decision making. Realistic estimates of the time and resource requirements of an advisory committee for both the steering committee and potential advisory committee members must be given. The steering committee has to ensure enough support is available to make the CAC successful. CACs are increasingly recognized as an important aspect in successful watershed management projects. Many factors determine the success or failure of a CAC — committee size, how committee members are chosen, agency staff and steering committee members' attitude toward CAC involvement. It is important that a record of all advisory meetings is developed and available to the public. One major factor in ascertaining the success of a CAC involves how the members relate to and interact with each other in committee meetings. Committee members need to respect each other's opinions.

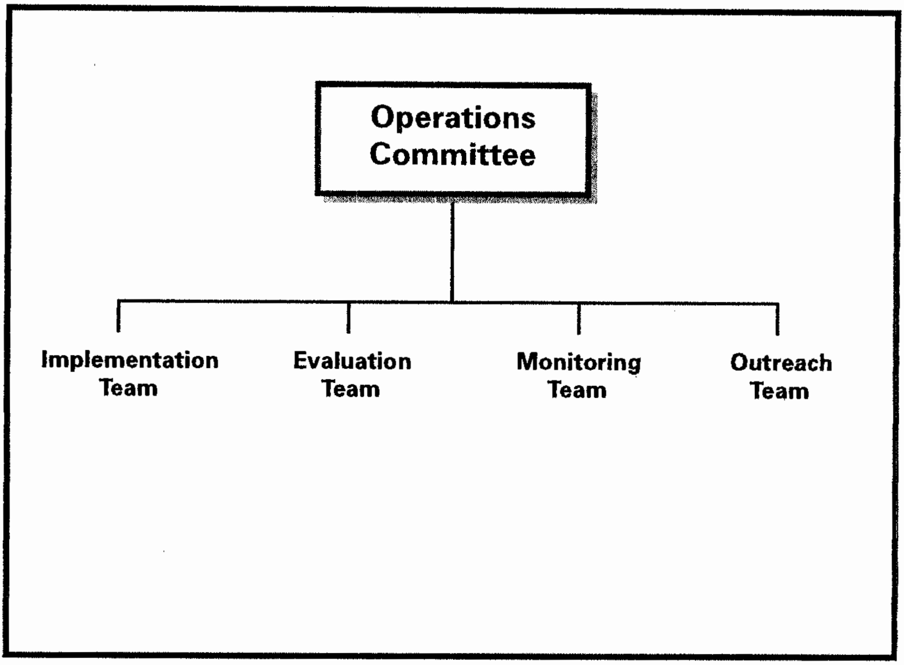

FIGURE 4.2 Operations committee and its teams. (Courtesy of CTIC, West Lafayette, IN.)

The CAC is a means of getting input to and assistance for the watershed management process. Partnerships should consider public hearings for clarifying issues; gathering information, positions, and opinions; and providing an opportunity for people to vent. The steering committee often faces stakeholders whose ideas range from skepticism regarding big government and a hands-off attitude to environmental extremist and government control. Citizen advisory committees instead of the steering committee can be the focal point for this type of stakeholder participation. Neighbors talking to neighbors is usually more effective than steering committees seeking support. Stakeholder participation in government-sponsored programs can result in a more informed public, improved government, and the best possible decisions for proposed actions or plans.

The operations committee is responsible for implementation, evaluation, outreach, and monitoring. Figure 4.2 highlights the administrative operations of the implementation aspects of the partnership. Depending on the scope and complexity of the implementation activities a number of operations teams or workgroups may need to be created to provide a focus for the various activities. At a minimum, workgroups should be formed for each function. The majority of successful watershed management efforts include a formal organization to develop and implement the outreach component. The planning committee determines the primary message, and the outreach team decides on target groups and the best strategies for reaching them. An important part of the outreach component is convincing stakeholders that they are stakeholders. It is important that the outreach effort is closely coordinated with the TAC and planning committee activities.

When completed studies, reports, and other information become available to the public, the partnership should consider creating a document repository. The operations committee would be responsible for the repository. This would be for assessment reports, planning documents, and implementation and evaluation reports. When studies and reports are summarized in a media release, fact sheet, or meeting notes, the public can be referred to the repository. A document repository should be a public location where interested people can gain access to program-related documents. When considering repository locations, consider not only the location, but also hours of operation, access for disabled people, proximity to public transportation, and availability of photocopying.

4.3.2 Partnership Operations

The partnership needs to adopt an operating process and ground rules in order to effectively and efficiently manage meetings and the decision-making process. While our government is based on an adversarial system, where proposals are made in public meetings and different groups of people advocate for or against the proposal, in most situations it is not a good example for public participation for watershed management plan development. In some instance's "Robert's Rules of Order" traditionally run meetings can be an impediment to open frank discussion and reaching agreements. Many democratic methods that foster a win–lose environment like voting may actually hinder reaching consensus. The win–lose environment results in a minority that may never truly buy into the proposed solution. A true stakeholder participatory process has the stakeholders not only advocating positions and debating issues, but also listening to a diversity of viewpoints, and developing compromises and solutions. It is not about tradeoffs or compromise. It is about respect and genuine support for recommendations and solutions to which everyone agrees. Seeking a consensus is best when all stakeholders need to support and implement the solutions. Consensus building is procedurally more burdensome to manage and usually more time-consuming, but it does provide a foundation for action and participation.

The challenge before the stakeholders is to reach consensus on management approaches that will address the unique needs across a watershed's various land uses in a logical and cost-effective manner. More watershed management efforts fail due to social and political reasons than the lack of a scientific solution. Consensus building helps avoid this problem. Consensus decision making is the most effective decision-making method that a partnership can utilize; however, it is not easy and takes commitment and time. What is consensus? It is a process that results in a decision that everyone can live with and everyone agrees to support and work toward.

Effective consensus decision making shares the following characteristics:

1. Total participation. All major interests are identified and included in the partnership. The partnership is actively involved in maintaining a broad range of stakeholders and citizens in the planning and implementation of the watershed management efforts.

2. All partners are responsible. Everyone assists in planning and implementation activities and offers suggestions to make them more practical and effective.
3. Partners educate each other. Partners spend time discussing the issues including the history from their perspective; their perceptions and concerns; and possible solutions. Each partner has the opportunity and responsibility for meaningful contributions.
4. People are kept informed. Participants keep their own groups and the partnerships informed. Partners document, publicize, and celebrate the successes through an ongoing recognition program and communication program. (See the social capacity building chapter for more information on developing and implementing a communication program.)
5. Multiple options are examined. Partners seek a range of options to satisfy their respective concerns and avoid promoting single positions.
6. Decisions are made by mutual agreement. Partners do not vote but modify options or seek alternatives until everyone agrees that the best decision has been reached.
7. Partners are responsible for implementation. The group members identify ways to implement solutions.

How do you reach consensus?

1. Establish the majority opinion
2. Examine all minority views, checking for understanding
3. Explore ideas to achieve a decision or position acceptable to all
4. Restate a new majority opinion
5. Establish the new majority opinion that becomes a consensus

Successful partnerships take time and commitment to develop. There are four main stages in the partnership development process. Each stage takes time and involves specific actions and feelings. Additionally, there are three aspects of a successful partnership: (1) there is buy-in by partners; (2) the partnership creates a framework with partners' ongoing needs; and (3) by making adjustments partners can usually make a big difference. Knowing these stages will make it easier for the partnership to move forward and reach success at the end.

1. Forming. Members cautiously explore each other. Feelings during this stage include skepticism and anxiety as well as optimism and excitement. Activities completed during this stage are establishing organization, goals, objectives, and work plans; determining what data and information needs to be collected for the project; and discussing issues, concerns, and concepts.
2. Storming. Partners become impatient and begin arguing. Feelings include resistance to change and negative attitudes about the success of the partnership and project. Partners exhibit the following behavior: argue about minor issues and concerns; become defensive; and wish to revisit existing agreements. Activities occurring this stage include discussing alternatives

and impacts and developing unrealistic goals and proposed activities. Partners become competitive, and tension and jealousy increase.

3. Normalizing. Conflicts are reduced and partners become more cooperative. Partners accept their roles as well as partnership norms. Feelings include acceptance of team membership. Partners exhibit the following behavior: achieve harmony by avoiding conflict; exhibit more friendliness and willingness to share problems and opportunities; and show a sense of team cohesion and common goals. Activities completed during this stage include plan development and implementation begins. Commitments from partners occur. Cooperation requires some recognition on part of each organization that the common interest is best achieved by some cooperative effort. Cooperation occurs when organizations share information and interact regarding specific tasks to benefit their clients or to achieve common goals.
4. Performing. The partnership has become an effective and close-knit group. Feelings include new insights about the partnership and each member's role as well as satisfaction with the partnership's progress. Partners exhibit the following behavior: constructive change; ability to work through issues and problems; and close attachment to the partnership. Activities completed during this stage include implementing and evaluating the plan and identifying new opportunities. As partners sustain communication and are able to understand more about each other, a number of critical choices present themselves. Similarities and differences emerge such as differing mandates, accountability, partnership flexibility, autonomy, leadership, partnership cultures, and partnership alliances. The new knowledge can create the potential for conflict (storming) as well as movement toward cooperation (normalizing and performing). One voice must not be dominant. All voices need to be heard, all positions identified, and all points of agreement acknowledged during the consensus-building process. Figure 4.3 shows the continuum of partnership relationships from the initial meeting to successful implementation. Cooperation builds from the points of agreement by changing policies and strategies. Cooperation requires some recognition by each partner that there is a common interest best met by some cooperative effort. Cooperation occurs when partners share information and interact around specific tasks to benefit the partnership or to achieve common goals. The primary signs of stability in a cooperative partnership include: institutionalizing information exchange; agreeing how to handle conflicts among partners; and sharing an identity as expressed in a mission statement or some other statement of their vision.

Coordination is attained when partners agree on strategies that modify existing services or activities to achieve more efficient and effective service consistent with the missions of their respective organizations. Coordination as represented on the continuum is broader than cooperation. Partners interface resources and they may need to change their own policies and practices in order to accomplish a task or deliver a service. They make long-term shared commitments based on the watershed

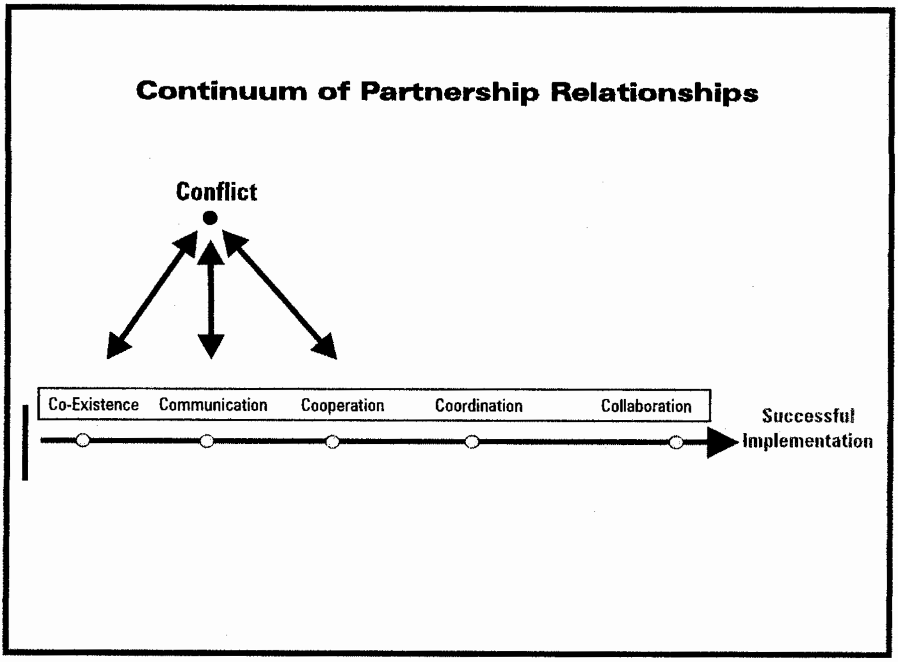

FIGURE 4.3 Continuum of partnership relationships. (Courtesy of CTIC, West Lafayette, IN.)

management plan. However, they do not fundamentally change the way they do business or make decisions. In collaboration the partners change the way they do business by placing the project's needs over the bureaucratic culture.

Most people agree with the notion of partnership, at least in principle, but that does not mean they will fully participate or that the partnership will be successful. The Conservation Technology Information Center (CTIC)[8,9] identifies a variety of reasons a partnership may be unsuccessful.

1. Lack of commitment. Partners have other commitments and limited resources, so it is important to ensure the partnership is working toward a worthwhile goal. For example, in the late 1990s, the USEPA's Region 5 Water Division embarked on a watershed project in Northeast Illinois to protect a trout stream; unfortunately, the effort failed. Changing priorities, lack of local stakeholders, and inability of management to comprehend the scope and need for long-term commitment resulted in the USEPA moving on and the project being abandoned by the other federal and state agencies who were supporting the USEPA's effort.
2. Past failures. Acknowledge past failures and use them when setting up the partnership. The history of unresolved conflict among members and unwillingness to work at resolving the conflict must not be viewed as a barrier. The most important thing is to learn from failure and not let it be

an omen of the future. For example, some managers agreed to everything but do not commit the resources needed to fulfill the commitment.

3. Concern about lost independence. Partners need to define their reality for working in the partnership. Partners need to clearly identify their commitments and the limitations of their involvement. All partners need to know they are working toward a worthwhile goal. Partners also need to know what is expected of them.
4. Personality conflicts. Select partners based on existing and potential skills, not personalities.
5. Lack of credit for contributions. Some partners do not receive credit for their contributions. Partners need to get credit for their contributions and keeping their own groups informed. The watershed management plan's communications plan needs to clearly identify roles and responsibilities for reporting achievements and how it will be done. For example, a number of early Darby Creek organization publications failed to list the USEPA as a partner, because it was providing its funding and support indirectly through other partnership organizations. This failure became a distraction in the development of future efforts because a focus of the work plan became ensuring the USEPA got recognition for its contribution.
6. Power struggles. Some partners have a disproportionate amount of power. Partners need to guard against using their authority and expertise to hinder the consensus-building process by exercising too much influence over the partnership. Some partners, in particular regulatory agencies such as the USEPA and USACOE, may want to use the partnership to pursue their own agenda rather than the goals of the partnership. This does not mean partnerships cannot be used to facilitate a regulatory agenda or effort. For example, the Superior (Wisconsin) Special Area Management Plan (SAMP)[10] was developed to protect and preserve high-quality wetlands in balance with sustainable development. Working with USACOE–St. Paul District and USEPA–Region 5, the partnership developed a SAMP that streamlined the regulatory process to expedite permit decisions. The SAMP development process took nearly seven years and involved a major commitment of time on the part of the city, the regulatory agencies, and other partners. Since the SAMP has been in place, the economic development benefit has been considerable, and the SAMP is now used as a marketing tool by the City of Superior. Other partners may look toward the partnership as a means to avoid or get out of regulatory commitments and requirements, which is also inappropriate. Partnerships need to target and acknowledge the differences in the vested interest of each partner and work with them.
7. Turf battles. Partners with historic feuds over areas of jurisdiction and program responsibilities need to work in a cooperation- and coordination-building mode to ensure they do not continue the feud in the current partnership.
8. Partners that do not agree on realistic roles, responsibilities, goals, or timeframe. This usually results in a lack of follow-through with commit-

ments. Decisions regarding commitments must be made by mutual agreement and not as individual expectations or by other agencies and organizations. Collaboration in a partnership requires a fundamental change in the way partner organizations and agencies function. Some decision making and planning are shared, and partners commit resources to be overseen by the steering committee that represents the partnership.
9. Differences in cultural and personal values. Partners need to think as an entity or group and not as individuals. Informal, social interaction can provide the foundation that holds the partnership together.
10. Communication is insufficient. Existence of communication in a partnership does not imply any other type of interaction. For partnerships to be capable of doing any work together, the partners must move from the communication stage to the cooperation stage.
11. Key interest not included or refusal to participate in the partnership.
12. Problems are not clearly defined or not felt to be critical; therefore, the focus lacks a clear purpose.

As part of the partnership-forming process, conflict can be expected between stakeholders. Figure 4.3 highlights when conflicts can be most often expected. Cooperative partnerships are vulnerable to conflict and will be unable to do productive work until they develop an identity as a partnership that is separate from and inclusive of their independent organizational identities. It needs to become "we," and the partners need to complete some simple tasks successfully and gain some experience working together.

A minimum level of trust must be established so that all partners will respect minimum operating rules and develop mechanisms for recognizing and resolving conflicts. In the watershed management process conflicts often arise. This occurs when partners' policies conflict, when social values conflict with environmental needs, or when planning recommendations conflict with existing polices and approaches. The five basic conflict management strategies are avoidance, accommodation, competition, compromise, and collaboration. The partnership, committee, or team must analyze the conflict and select the most appropriate strategy to address it. There are four basic principles to help partnerships avoid destructive conflicts and promote constructive interaction. Where conflicts cannot be avoided, these principles minimize the fall out from it.

The four principles are:

1. Preserve everyone's dignity.
2. Listen with concern.
3. Be flexible while maintaining your independence.
4. Do not expect people's personalities to change.

The discussion that follows provides an overview of conflict resolution and management. If the partnership is in an extremely hostile situation, it may require skill beyond the partnership's capabilities to resolve. It should not hesitate to get help from someone who specializes in conflict mediation. Resolving conflicts is not a mechanical process in which applying steps one through six, listed below, guarantees resolution. It is important to note that not all conflict is resolvable. Conflicts based on value systems or personalities are the most common unresolvable conflicts. Conflict is a normal part of human interaction. Anytime a shared resource is at stake, you can expect differing views regarding the importance, use, value, or investment in that resource. In many instances organizations and agencies will have formal positions regarding a resource and its use. Rather than always working to avoid conflicts, it may be more efficient and effective to manage conflict. Conflicts cannot be ignored. A number of negative aspects are associated with conflict within a partnership: partners can become less motivated and inactive; intergroup tension can increase and divert attention from the objectives; antagonism can increase; partners may seek safer subjects and not address difficult or controversial issues; and stress and frustration can occur. Successfully resolving conflicts does have positive aspects: it increases partnership cohesion; partners learn more about the individuals involved; and the partners grow with the conflict experience. There are various management strategies for addressing conflicts: ventilation, active listening, reduction, brainstorming, and compromising. CTIC[9] in *Managing Conflict, a Guide for Watershed Partnership* covers understanding and managing conflicts, as well as negotiation skills in the context of watershed partnership dynamics.

The partners' differing views and positions concerning the waterbody need to be identified and worked with; address them openly and respectively. Focusing on interest rather than position makes it possible for the partners to come up with better agreements. Remember that people's feelings are just as real to them as facts are. It is important to note some of these conflicts may be related to historic or personal difficulties between individuals and groups. Conflict is always a possibility in a partnership setting (Figure 4.3). Conflict is not always apparent or overt. At the early development stage of a partnership, conflict can destroy fragile beginning relationships. Initial partnership efforts to work together are often vulnerable to conflict, and relationships may go in and out of conflict in the early stages. Two types of conflict have been identified in watershed partnerships: destructive and constructive. Destructive conflicts are generally unresolved. They may be real or perceived, provide the foundation for defensiveness, reduce communication, and can even cause the termination of some of the working relationships within the partnership. Constructive conflict can result in relationships becoming stronger; parties become more effective at working out their differences; parties begin to work in an atmosphere of trust; the parties having the conflict are satisfied with the outcome; and all parties have improved ability to resolve future conflict. A six-step process to manage and minimize a conflict follows:

1. Identify and define the conflict. Determine the conflict's content and history. Pay particular attention to personalities and positions.
2. Brainstorm. Solicit discussion, information, etc. from all partners.
3. Evaluate the information. Make sure everyone understands the facts and feelings behind the conflict.
4. Choose a solution. Identify common goals and values related to the issue or concern. Document the areas of agreement. Offer a compromise for

the unresolved issues. Review any proposed agreements, and make sure everyone understands them. If a compromise cannot be reached, table the issue and move to the next issue. This rule for consensus is useful: if on a particular issue, stakeholders still disagree after extensive discussion, the stakeholders must be able to agree that everyone has been given a chance to be heard and the consensus agreement represents the best solution at the time.

5. Implement the solution. Solidify agreements and begin to implement the agreement.
6. Follow up. Check to make sure everyone is abiding by the agreement.

It is important just to spend time and resources maintaining the partnerships. A number of activities can be done to maintain and strengthen the partnership. They include:

- Start with small projects that will provide early successes.
- Keep the partners focused on a common goal and task before the group.
- Respect participants' time.
- Document and celebrate progress.
- Build ownership for the partnership at all levels of the partner organization.
- Maintain a stable structure, with accountability to partners.
- Identify specific benefits to stakeholders and participants.
- Never blame. Always allow participants a means of saving face.

The primary signs of stability in cooperative partnerships include institutionalization of information exchange and agreement about how to handle conflicts among partners.

4.4 INSTITUTIONAL ASPECTS

The partnership has to determine how formal it needs to be in order to function. For example, if the partnership is going to be responsible for directly receiving funds, manage consultants and contractors, and obtain permits, it should create an organization to handle this. If a partnership has designated a lead agency to handle the administrative and oversight functions, it can be less formal. If designating a new or existing organization significant, new responsibilities, the partnership needs to make sure it has the capacity and resources to do the work.

Another issue that needs to be addressed during this process is the need for a formal signed agreement between the partnership and government agencies. Formal agreements provide partnerships a bridge to agencies during reorganizations and staffing changes. In spite of the requisite staff resources that agencies can bring to a watershed management effort, they cannot dominate and make a mockery of the partnership concept. The most common misstep agencies make today in soliciting participation is presenting a partnership a watershed management plan prepared by professionals without their input. This violates the basic premise of public participation and seldom results in community ownership of the plan. Formal agreements attempt to avoid disappointment and misunderstanding. Formal agreements should list the specific actions to be taken by the agencies, include deadlines for each action, include a conflict resolution process should misunderstanding occur, and include a definitions section for terms that may mean different things to different organizations and agencies.

It is important to keep in mind that individuals attending the partnership meeting represent and make the commitment for their respective agencies. In many agencies, such as the USEPA, midlevel managers and staff are unable to make long-term commitments to efforts due to the lack of authority or technical expertise concerning what needs to be done. Due to the long time frames for watershed management efforts, it is important to gain the support of the resource decision makers within agencies, for example, the regional administrators for the USEPA, and the state conservationist for the USDA–Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Watershed partnerships may have limited ability to influence upper-level agency administrators, but their ability to involve agency champions to pursue and secure agency support plays an important role in the partnership's ultimate level of accomplishment. In addition to the aspects mentioned earlier, formal agreements with agencies also help address the issue of conflicting messages from local, state, tribal, or federal agencies participating in a watershed management effort which often then results in low rates of participation. Each agency must clearly define its role and how the agency will interact with other partners to avoid confusion, duplication of efforts, or competition. Agency administrators need to express support for the effort and emphasize the need for partnership communication and cooperation.

4.5 POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT

The first part of developing political support for the watershed management effort is to gain an understanding of the community interest in the water resources. Community benefits from watershed management often include improved implementation of traditional delegated water programs, improved certainty and predictability for residents, and improved community ability to allocate lands to their most appropriate or suitable uses. The goal is to make the watershed management efforts visible to the general public and to put local political support in a situation where they will gain in public image with their support. A number of variables such as money and threats to the environment enable implementation. But the greatest variable is the power of the concerned citizen that can tip the scale most often to support implementation.

"Tip" O'Neil, former speaker of the House, once said, "All politics are local," and to that can be added "and all watershed management efforts are passionately political." The term "politics" itself gives an indication of the problem, "poly" meaning many and "tic" referring to the blood-sucking burrowing insect. The biggest challenge most partnerships face is bringing local officials with diverse ideas together to develop support for watershed management efforts that transcend their political boundaries.

Local authorities are making decisions every day regarding land use, zoning, and new developments that affect the quality of the watershed. Local government officials' involvement and support have been identified as a key to the success of watershed management planning and implementation. Obtaining the enthusiastic support of one or more influential politicians is crucial to most land-use planning and implementation efforts. This can make everything else come much more easily. In order to develop your strategy on how to gain elected officials' involvement and support, it is important you have an understanding of their possible reasons for participating. Coastlines[11] summarizes portions of a study on local government officials' participation in watershed management planning. The study conducted by the Social and Environmental Research Institute located in Leverett, MA, focused on local government officials from three national estuary projects. The first phase of the study covered their reasons for deciding whether or not to get involved with their respective estuary projects. The second phase of the study ranked the items in order of importance for their involvement. The third phase analyzed the data from the first two phases to find patterns. An analysis (inverted factor analysis) of the ranked order of importance identified five patterns of beliefs that were then translated into general perspectives. These general perspectives, presented below, are not exclusive in nature and need to be viewed in the context of the local political and social conditions.

- Perspective one. Influencing outcomes through engaged, effective interaction with others. Individuals with perspective are concerned about the capability of the project to achieve results and the working relationships with project participants.
- Perspective two. Finding the time in a busy schedule. There is a need to show the relevance to the community. Individuals with perspective participate in watershed efforts to provide direct benefits to the community and address problems facing the community.
- Perspective three. Solving problems and serving community. This perspective reflects a problem-driven approach to deciding whether or not to participate, which is very much locally based. For example, protecting the community's drinking-water supply from encroaching development would advocate for involvement.
- Perspective four. Moral compulsion, power, and effectiveness. This perspective is characteristic of an individual who believes that his or her involvement will have a positive impact. To these morally driven individuals, the results matter, not the quality of the process.
- Perspective five. Matching skills, experiences, and position with the project. This point of view reflects whether there is a match between the individual's ethics, experience, and personal interest and the watershed management efforts.

These various perspectives indicate that there is no one way to approach local government officials. To maximize local government officials' participation in a watershed management effort, it must be presented in a variety of ways that highlight different values, needs, and beliefs for different officials. Since time constraints are a limiting factor for local government officials' involvement, a variety of levels of participation needs to be presented when approaching them for their support. Positive approaches for involving the politicians include:

Use of advisory committees
One-on-one contact
Workshops
Use of public comments, procedures, and public hearings

In *Restoring Streams in Cities* Ann Riley[12] shares a valuable lesson she learned from community organizing experts concerning arranging meetings with local public officials to gain their support. When meeting with pubic officials, no fewer than five citizens should participate in the meeting to discuss the effort. The reasons for the critical mass are to demonstrate diverse support for your efforts and present the plan as a group, which creates a different dynamic with local public officials than if just one or two individuals approach the officials. Creating this dynamic should result in your efforts seen as higher priority for local officials' involvement and support. In demonstrating diverse support include a combination of civic, social, and business organizations as well as traditional environmental groups. Follow up the meeting with invitations to participate in high-profile events.

It is always beneficial to obtain congressional support and involvement in your watershed management effort. In addition to assistance in obtaining financial support from various agencies or directly through pork barrel mechanisms, congressional staff can be very helpful in facilitating your interactions with federal agencies. Congressional involvement will not result in watershed management efforts' circumventing existing laws and regulations. However, congressional involvement and interest will increase the level of attention and involvement federal agencies provide to the effort.

4.6 CONCLUSION

The questions a watershed partnership should be able answer are:

1. Who are we?
2. What are we about (mission statement)?
3. What do we do?
4. How do we function?

For more information regarding the stages of partnerships and conflicts, see:

CTIC, *Building Local Partnership, a Guide for Watershed Partnerships,* Know Your Watershed Kit Guides, CTIC, West Lafayette, IN, 1995.
CTIC, *Managing Conflict, a Guide for Watershed Partnerships,* Know Your Watershed Kit Guides, CTIC, West Lafayette, IN, 1995.
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